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Introducing Ken Burns

by Joe Escobar - Sunday, January 13, 2013, 1:01 AM

To post, you will click the "reply" link MY post. If you want to reply to a specific comment made by another student, click the "reply" link located on that student's specific post.

I strongly recommend that you do NOT attempt to answer all questions in a single post. There is no limit to the number of posts and replies you can make this week.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

When addressing the materials and questions, DO NOT leave your subject line blank (or the same as mine). Put something descriptive in the subject line of your post, such as "Burn's Video", "First Article", or "Historical Problems". Other students wanting to talk about the same topic can click the "reply" button to your post, thus helping organize this discussion.

Sum of ratings: -

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Video Clip

by Robyn Stevens - Monday, January 14, 2013, 6:48 PM

I was really surprised that Ken Burns was so passionate about history and wanting to make these films so other people could feel that same passion. I watched the series, The Civil War, years ago and never would have thought it took that much work to make this film. I think that he really tries to make his films as accurately as possible so that when the public is viewing his films he can present the right information about the time period being represented. I really liked the the message of the video clip and was really excited to actually hear him talk about his private thoughts and ideas about history.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

1

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Re: Video Clip

by Mark Gorski - Monday, January 14, 2013, 9:06 PM



In this day and age of political correctness it is refreshing to find a film maker who is as devoted to presenting true and unrevised historical facts and deductions in a way that is not only easy to watch but actually quite entertaining..

I have been what could be considered a US History enthusiast for close to 30 years and in that time I have come across many historical films and publications that seemed to, for whatever reason, slant their evaluations of historical events to suit a particular mind set. Because of this I have learned to view historical films and publications as more of a launching point for further research and not as a definitive work on a particular subject.

Like several of my classmates I had watched the Ken Burns series many years ago when it was first released by P.B.S. and was impressed. Impressed but cautious. I chose to research several of the key points made by Mr. Burns and found that his accuracy and clarity of presentation were as close to historical accuracy as possible.

The American Civil War is the most written about period in human history because of the effects and influences it had on not just the United States but the entire world so one would think that everything about the war has already been covered. This is not necessarily the case. While just about every day of the war has at one time or another been researched and written about no one has ever attempted to compile facts, information, opinion and photographs covering not only the entire war but the events leading up to it the way Ken Burns has.

The Introducing Ken Burns video clip fails to mention how long it took to make the Civil War series of films but I would imagine that it took several people several years to put together these videos.

Great work Mr. Burns.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Burns Video Clip



by Alexander Kristy - Tuesday, January 15, 2013, 9:44 PM

I don't know if I'd say I found myself admiring Ken Burns but I do enjoy his documentaries. I have seen some of his documentaries before. It was interesting to see how he puts together his documentaries. He seemed to have a close crew of people who help him with his videos and that shows in the quality of his films. I never knew how he and PBS teamed up together and I was fascinated to hear that he had never made a film that hadn't been broadcasted on PBS first. I liked the message of the short video clip, he has a passion for his film subjects and it is reflected in his documentaries. I've seen parts of the Civil War film before but I'm eager to watch them all now.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Burns Video Clip**

by Mark Gorski - Wednesday, January 16, 2013, 11:32 AM

While I didn't find myself "admiring" Ken Burns I did find myself respecting him and his team of researchers and film makers. Their dedication to accuracy while making their films entertaining is quite refreshing. There are far too many historical films that either leave behind facts for the sake of entertainment or leave behind entertainment for the sake of facts.

Let's face it, when history is presented in a way that primarily spouts facts and figures we quickly get bored with it and loose interest. On the other hand when history is presented in a way that is entertaining enough to hold our interest that history is frequently devoid of actual facts.

Ken Burns and his team have somehow managed to make a film that not only presents us with facts but does so in a way that entertains us. The video clip clearly shows us his dedication but it also shows us his passion for the materials that he is presenting.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Burns Video Clip**

by Meleah Drews - Wednesday, January 16, 2013, 9:46 PM

I like what you said about how too many historical films either leave behind facts for the sake of entertainmet or leave behind entertainment for the sake of facts.

(A couple of Mel Gibson films come to mind where facts were sacrificed for entertainment). I have not seen the Civil War series before, but watched the first episode last night. I was completely engaged. I think Burns has struck upon a good formula for making historical films with the combination of pictures, different voices for narration and quotes, in combination with the music. The episode was packed with information and I found myself frequently scrolling back to review what I had missed.

Although Burns' critics say he misrepresented a few historical facts, or was lean on details leading up to the war, I think Ken Burns and his team did their due dilligence in vetting the issues by consulting with and including academic historians in the process of making the film.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Burns video clip**  



by Meleah Drews - Tuesday, January 15, 2013, 9:46 PM

Watching the video clip of Ken Burns I found myself intrigued by his approach to film making and excited to watch the Civil War series. In his opening statement he states he approaches new projects with "ignorance and curiosity" which allows him to discover the story to be told (Burns video clip). Using this approach I can see where it could allow for some stories to be featured that other historians may view as trivial, while other stories which may typically occupy a central role in history may be touched on minimally if at all. I think Burns will provide a historical perspective and take artistic freedom to tell the stories which have impacted him.

This latitude that Burns takes is similar to that which James McPherson takes in deciding to omit great detail of the Lincoln assassination in our text. Is it wrong to exclude an event which has great significance in our history? Does it make the text less credible? I don't believe so, nor do I think the stories Burns chose to omit will diminish his work.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Burns video clip

by Ryan Lundberg - Sunday, January 20, 2013, 1:01 PM

You bring up an interesting point about artistic freedom. I think Burns' series was popular in part because of its emotional power and human interest. This contrasts with the "average" history book that tends to present history as dry, impersonal events. I'm not sure that statistics and graphs could capture the desires and dilemmas associated with fighting the war the way Sullivan Ballou's letter to his wife did. After hearing it read, I was floored, and I felt that in a small way I understood what it must have been like to be a part of history unfolding during that time.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Burns video clip

by Meleah Drews - Sunday, January 20, 2013, 6:54 PM

The letter Sullivan Ballou wrote to his wife had a strong impact on me as well. I don't know if any of the pictures displayed during the reading of his letter were of him and his wife, but it didn't really matter. The effectiveness of Ken Burns' creativity ending the first episode with the reading of that letter and photos of families made a powerful statement of the cost of war. Frequently historians and politicians measure the cost of war using impersonal terms such as "casualties of war" or "collateral damage" which distances us from the human element of war. In this series Burns has been able to remind viewers of the greater cost of war measured not just by the number of soldiers who died, but the impact it has on families and society.

Throughout this first episode there have been several readings from Mary Chestnut's diary entries. She was not a soldier but a southern woman of high society. While historians may not find her diary entries important in a documentary about the Civil War, I think quite the opposite. It paints a broader picture of what it must have been like to live through this time in history.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Confidence about the War Between the States

by Robyn Stevens - Tuesday, January 15, 2013, 10:10 PM

When reading any book about The Civil War or watching any movie/documentary about the war, I think you should be open minded to the information you are given. This is how a person usually learns. As an individual, you have to decide if the information you are receiving is accurate and if you agree with it.

I really like the materials that are being used as resources in this class. The Civil War is one of the best documentaries I have ever seen with The West being a close second. I really think that Ken Burns has went to extraordinary levels to make sure this film is as accurate as it can possibly be. I think that watching this will remind me of information that I have forgotten about but will also give me new information that might have been missed the first time I watched it years ago.

The point of this post is just to be clear about my opinion of this series, which I think will be an added bonus to the reading material. This subject is very interesting and I look forward to all the different resources used in the class. Positive or negative.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Thoughts about Ken Burns

by Windy Ficcadenti - Tuesday, January 15, 2013, 11:37 PM

I very much so did find myself admiring Ken Burns and the message he presented in the video clip. I didn't know before watching this clip that he has never had a video air without it showing on PBS first, in a way I kind of found myself respecting him for it. I have seen some of his work in the past and have always enjoyed it. The passion he has for making films is very evident. I particularly found the way in which he builds his movies to the music from the start interesting. I have noticed the music score in The Civil War causes more emotions to be stirred, which in turn makes me pay even more attention to what is being said. I have to say, I'm quite excited to watch this series.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Did you feel the same way after reading the first article?

by Mark Gorski - Wednesday, January 16, 2013, 11:36 AM

Actually, after reading the first article I almost feel compelled to defend Ken Burns and his film. There have been far too many historical films and publications that have faded into the dust bins of history because of their inability to capture the viewer or reader due to their dry, bland, factual yet boring presentation of their subject. Or because their views and opinions were clearly slanted towards a particular point of view.

The Civil War series by Ken Burns manages to present us with historical facts in such a way that not only educates us but also entertains us. The film series is not meant to be the best source of information out there, it is meant to wet our appetites and give us a much greater understanding of the period. Some of us will take that renewed interest and build upon it while others will simply come away with a deeper appreciation of history.

And after all, isn't that the true aim of an educator?

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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Second Article: Concerns

by Ryan Lundberg - Wednesday, January 16, 2013, 1:10 PM

After reading the second article, I'm most concerned about the comprehensiveness and accuracy of Ken Burns Civil War documentary. First, as Michael A. Morrison and Robert E. May point out, episode one uses about forty minutes to explain the causes of the Civil War, less than ten percent of the total documentary running time. This stands in contrast to Battle Cry of Freedom which uses 305 pages, or thirty six percent of its text to illustrate the causes and events leading up to the Civil War. Secondly, Morrison and May give specific examples where Burns documentary is factually incorrect. For example, the documentary states a general date for a speech given by Abraham Lincoln as 1837, whereas Morrison and May claim the speech was specifically given on January 27, 1838.

Although these two examples are enough to make me turn a critical eye towards Burns documentary, they are not nearly enough to make me fully discount the general quality of the series. There are nine episodes in this documentary. It's hard to imagine that nine days or nine months would be enough time to fully comprehend every aspect of the Civil War. But I believe 608 minutes is more than enough time to give a general understanding of the war. Also, the specific criticism that a larger percentage of relative time is not dedicated to certain aspects of the war is largely subjective. Is thirty six percent the golden ratio that defines comprehensiveness? There is no doubt that there were a multitude of causes that led to the Civil War, but it's hard to fault a documentary about the Civil War for mainly focusing on the war itself. This documentary is not labeled as "The Epically Long Road To The Civil War."

Concerning the other criticism stated, Morrison and May call into doubt the accuracy of the documentary by disputing the date of a Lincoln speech. Interestingly, earlier in their article

they point out that 16,000 photographs alone were sorted through to produce this documentary. Given that level of detail paid just to photographs, it's entirely plausible to assume that more than one source was found for the Lincoln speech. So, which source is correct, and is the documentary incorrect because it did not state the date given by the single source in the article?

Overall, I think Morrison and May raise some interesting questions. But I don't think they do enough to personally dissuade me from viewing Burns documentary as a good, general summary of the Civil War. If anything, they just reminded me that history is not absolute and that six hundred minutes cannot fully explain six hundred thousand lives.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Second Article: Concerns



by Kale Sheldon - Wednesday, January 16, 2013, 2:47 PM

I completely agree with your assessment on Ken Burns. I've seen quite a few of his films, and they come off as quite accurate, but I think videos and movies can be deceiving when it comes to portraying history accurately, mainly because the main point of film is to entertain rather than be completely accurate, and film can only brush the surface of its subject, while a book usually dives in much deeper. The second article we read, "The Limitations of Classroom Media," put it into perspective nicely. The authors say that they don't wish to take Ken Burns Civil War film off of shelves in class rooms, they just do not want teachers to make that film the only historical interpretation of the American Civil War that students see or read.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Second Article: Concerns



by Alexander Kristy - Sunday, January 20, 2013, 7:52 PM

I don't think that just because the introduction to "The Civil War" is only 40 minutes it should take away from the quality of the documentary. As far as the general date given about the speech Lincoln made it is technically wrong and the actual date is January 27, 1838, but the Lyceum Address is given during the "Panic of 1837." So I'm willing to give Burns a pass about this. I think that the reviews that Morrison and May give are more based on how they view the Civil War. In their eyes they look at the Civil War differently and analyze it in a different way. I searched around about Morrison and he wrote a book called "Slavery and the American West: The Eclipse of Manifest Destiny and the Coming of the Civil War." The book did receive some good reviews but not all of them were good. Here's one of them <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=1899>. This review shows how differently he looks at the War. I don't think that just because you read a couple of negative reviews about anything you should agree or disagree with them. Individuals need to look at who is making the reviews and their backgrounds before they agree or disagree.

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by Adam Coutts - Wednesday, January 16, 2013, 2:58 PM

I was incredibly impressed with Ken Burns especially with the way he and his team dealt with every project, he said "We approach our projects with ignorance and curiosity, this allows us to have a process of discovery...joyful process to learning something new." He and his team find actual photo's from the time period and he even gets actors and actresses that we've seen in big time films to provide the voices of many of the men and women who no longer have a voice and its so very powerful. I've seen a few of what I didn't at the time know were Ken Burns' films, they were excellent in my opinion. If this is one of the filmmakers we'll be watching within this term then I am looking forward to the videos presented by Ken Burns.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**A Compelling Introduction!**

by Ian MacDonald - Wednesday, January 16, 2013, 3:27 PM

While learning about any specific time or event in history, if there is one thing in particular that I find myself having difficulty with, it is being able to retain all the information. And I think that is largely due to my "mind wandering" I guess! If something isn't interesting or powerful enough to hold my attention, I will easily get side tracked. After watching the introduction video on Ken Burns' series, "The Civil War", my first impression was, this does not sound like something that is going to cause me to get side tracked! I was actually compelled to go and watch the first episode of the series after watching the introduction. I do admire Ken Burns' approach of creating an informative yet entertaining documentary of one of America's most crucial times in history. I look forward to watching these episodes and hope that it is everything it seems to be!

Sum of ratings:1 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Still want to watch**

by Meleah Drews - Wednesday, January 16, 2013, 9:20 PM

My interest in watching the series was not diminished by the critiques in either article. I imagine the series to provide a perspective on the Civil War, but not to raise all of the questions or deliver all of the answers to such a complex event in our nations history. In the first article, historian and filmmaker Leon Litwack was critical of Burns' film because it failed to address the social revolution initiated by the Civil War (Bedford article, p2). To me that seems like an entirely different series. One that could span to present day.

Both articles seemed to raise the question of who has the right and responsibility to compile, interpret and deliver history. I question if *The Civil War* would have had as much criticism if so many Americans hadn't viewed it. The concern seemed to be enhanced because of the success of the series. If historians were truly concerned about a filmmaker's interpretation of historical events, then wouldn't Burns' other films garner the same types of criticisms?

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Still want to watch

by Samuel Moffenbier - Thursday, January 17, 2013, 10:24 AM

"If historians were truly concerned about a filmmaker's interpretation of historical events, then wouldn't Burns' other films garner the same types of criticisms?"

I would argue that there are few events in American history that are so hotly debated (even today) than the causes and events surrounding the Civil War. Is it because we have significant populations of people living with the cultural and social aftermath of two strikingly different outcomes? I've heard that there have been a few controversies surrounding historical information presented in Southern textbooks.* The political legacies, surely, still exist. This also was his first major documentary series (by that I mean exceeding more than just an hour or two in length) and it was produced in 1990 and anything new is certainly going to draw attention whether it's positive or negative. Frankly, I'm enjoying the documentary series and look forward to watching more. I think it was mentioned in one of the articles that Ken Burns didn't want these to be the first or last word on the events and they aren't but they certainly are a wonderful and easily digestible touchstone for the conflict.

*<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/10/19/AR2010101907974.html?hpid=topnews>

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Still want to watch

by Meleah Drews - Saturday, January 19, 2013, 11:14 PM

That is interesting about there being *"controversies surrounding historical information presented in Southern textbooks."* I guess I should not be surprised. I imagine that would be true for all wars. When two sides are at odds, neither is going to want to be seen as the "wrong" side. I have heard before that history is written by the winners, which assumes that the "winners" of wars were on the correct side of the issue(s). This is a good reminder of the importance of using critical thinking when reading historical texts and watching historical documentaries.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Still want to watch**

by Alexander Kristy - Sunday, January 20, 2013, 6:32 PM

I agree that the Civil War and the causes and events leading up to the war are greatly debated. I think many scholars and novice historians alike would argue the many different reasons for the Civil War so it's hard to judge what is the correct answer to that question. I grew up in Virginia and lived there through high school and I can say that I was taught quite a bit on the Civil War and I found that some of the information I learned was different from those who grew up on the West Coast. The Civil War was studied every year of school through high school and I don't find that to be the same with other students that I have talked to. The information that I recieved did seem to be more favorably to the southern ideology. As I've gotten older and studied more on this subject I've learned to consider where the information was coming from.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**What concerns, if any, did you have after reading the second article**

by Mark Gorski - Thursday, January 17, 2013, 10:08 AM

I was actually disappointed in the 2nd article. Many of the country's foremost historians are exactly that, academic historians. They are not teachers or entertainers. I sat through an entire semester of a history class that was extremely boring. I had no doubt that the instructor knew what he was talking about, he just presented it in a way that would put most people to sleep. In my opinion the best educators are the ones who not only know their subject but can capture and hold their student's imagination and instill in them a desire to learn more.

The opening paragraph of this article states;

"Americans usually watch TV to be entertained. But in the fall of 1990, a remarkable thing occurred. Some forty million American-by far the largest PBS viewing audience ever-tuned in to an eleven-hour, five-night history lesson-Ken Burns' The Civil War. Although gruesome photographs of battlefield carnage drove away a few, most viewers found themselves moved by the documentary's rich text, mesmerized by its haunting visuals, and charmed by its melancholy period music. For one week Ken Burns held court as master history teacher to a nation. In his nation-wide classroom, it was a rare student who squirmed restlessly or stole furtive glances at the clock".

But then the article goes on to call into question the accuracy of the video series. Upon further reading we discover that the writers of this article were pointing out factual errors that were so minor as to truly make no real difference in the accuracy of the series in general. One almost gets the impression that these academicians were trying to discredit

Ken Burns and his series for personal reasons. Ken Burns is not an academic historian, he is not an entertainer, he is an educator. His historical films capture and hold his viewer's imagination while instilling a desire to learn more.

I personally choose to take this article with the proverbial grain of salt and view this video series as it was intended. A launching point for further study.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: What concerns, if any, did you have after reading the second article



by Robyn Stevens - Saturday, January 19, 2013, 1:10 PM

I agree with your analysis of the article. After reading the article I was somewhat taken aback by all the negative.

The article did have some good points like not all of the slaves were treated as badly as was portrayed. Some plantation owners cared for the slaves, gave them medical and dental care, and provided basic necessities for them. Throughout most of the south, slavery was usually as bad as it was portrayed. It is true however, that it did vary from plantation to plantation. On Davis' plantation he even had records of two slaves living to be over 100 years old. Was this article meant to be a discredit to Ken Burns? I think so.

Even after reading the article I still can say that I will be watching all of the episodes with an open mind and a willingness to learn. I do think that Ken Burns made a fabulous documentary and it is up to each individual to form his or her own opinion as to what is or is not true and to do thier own research of the subject.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: What concerns, if any, did you have after reading the second article



by Ryan Lundberg - Sunday, January 20, 2013, 1:58 PM

I see that you referenced the part of the second article where it's pointed out that not all Southerners lived on cotton planations and not all slaves performed gang labor in the fields.

Honestly, when I read that part of the article, I had a visceral response. I kind of got a little angry. I know I'm viewing slavery through twenty first century ideals, but I had a hard time accepting the insinuation that slavery wasn't comprehensively bad because conditions varied from one slave to another. I found it particularly galling when the authors of the article wrote about all the horrific effects of slavery presented in the first episode, whippings, etc., and then go on to say that not all slaves tended cotton crops. As if growing tobacco or sugar meant that a slave could never be whipped. Or that one plantation owner

was a good guy because he let one slave out of his entire plantation have "access" to his library. Or finally, that the main sign of a bad owner was if slaves managed to escape bondage.

I don't know. I understand that the presentation of slavery in the first episode was a generalization. But, I guess I see slavery as slavery, and no matter what the conditions, owning another human being is fundamentally wrong.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: What concerns, if any, did you have after reading the second article

by Alexander Kristy - Sunday, January 20, 2013, 6:54 PM

I completely agree with you. Bottom line..slavery is slavery, plain and simple it's flat out wrong! Trying to say that not all slaves were treated poorly doesn't make it any less wrong. Come on, it's appalling that one would try and rationalize slavery from plantation to plantation. Who cares if some of them got medical help or they didn't get whipped. They were owned by another person and weren't free so that's all that should matter.

It was mentioned above that some of the slaves received basic necessities and things weren't all that bad for some of the slaves. Think about that for a minute. That's the same way those slave owners treated their animals.

They provide them with basic necessities and care so that they can still profit off of them. The slave owners were treating their slaves the same way..the so called good slave owners. In my opinion there's no gray area here. If you were a slave owner you were participating in a horrible act.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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In response to the articles about Ken Burns' series.

by Ian MacDonald - Thursday, January 17, 2013, 11:24 AM

After reading both articles about Ken Burns' series, it did tend to make me question the historical accuracy of the series a little more. Particularly the second article, "The Limitations of Classroom Media" by Michael Morrison and Robert May, because it pulled several examples straight from the first episode and described the entire series as "not being accurate history." However, I personally believe that these reviews can't always be taken at face value. Part of a critic's job is to analyze the weak parts as well as the strong parts, no matter how minuscule the weak parts may be. I fully intend to watch the series as I originally planned and pass my own judgment as to whether or not I think it is "accurate history"

Sum of ratings:1 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Ken Burns' proposed reason for the beginning of the civil war**

by Kirk Nikas - Sunday, January 20, 2013, 7:39 PM

Ilan,

It didn't bother you at all that the first 18 minutes of the film is comprised of what I hear to be the only mention of slavery throughout the entire Civil War series?

-kirk

Sum of ratings:1 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Feelings after the first article**

by Alexander Kristy - Thursday, January 17, 2013, 3:35 PM

Seems to me that fans of the series didn't seem to have much of a problem with the film, but the historians and professors were much more divided. After reading the first article my opinion on Ken Burns hasn't changed. I understand why some historians had a problem with the series, citing different reasons for their concern of how Civil War history is being portrayed in Burn's film. Daniel Walkowitz quotes historians who criticize Burns for "his reliance on vintage 19th Century interpretation," who found the series 'luxuriant on military detail, thin on political context,' and who criticized Burns' 'insistence on retaining visual beauty rather than tackling difficult questions.' (first article, pg. 3). While this criticism is valid, I think Burns has a good point when he responds by saying "What we were trying to produce is not a piece of academic paper. We were trying to speak to a very large audience...and excite them and not be the last word or the first word." (first article, pg. 3). Professor Simon Schama, Harvard University, defends the series by saying "Quite good history was written in the 19th Century." (first article, pg. 3).

I think one good thing that comes from documentaries is that it can reach a wider audience than an academic paper can. Many people wouldn't even think about reading an academic paper on anything but they will watch a documentary, especially if it's well made. I would never expect any documentary to cover all the information on any topic; and when you're talking about something as important and large as the Civil War it's hard to assume that nothing will be left out. What documentary films can do is bring awareness to an audience that maybe wouldn't have paid much attention to the subject before. I think in that regard Burns does a good job of that.

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by Alexander Kristy - Thursday, January 17, 2013, 3:50 PM



I am confident the Ken Burns Civil War Series will provide me with some good information. I'm sure there are going to be some things that will be excluded and I will probably have to research those things on my own but that doesn't bother me. I have rarely come across anything, whether it's a book, an article, a documentary, an academic paper, etc. that didn't leave out some information on the subject being discussed. So, when it comes to this series that we will be watching to get our main video source of historical information I will take that mentality into viewing each chapter. As with any source of historical information, it's up to each individual to interpret the information being provided and who the source is. I am confident in Ken Burns' ability to provide me with some good knowledge of the Civil War, and I hope that I am not wrong.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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First Glance at Ken Burns series

by Brendan MacDonald - Thursday, January 17, 2013, 8:35 PM

Upon watching the introduction video, I was very amazed at the level of time and careful thinking that Ken Burns and his team put into making the series as genuine as possible! The part I found really interesting is when he started discussing how great an impact music could have on presenting things in a way that made it more appealing. In watching the video, I found myself eager by the time it had ended to start watching the series!

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Thoughts about 1st article on Ken Burns series

by Brendan MacDonald - Thursday, January 17, 2013, 8:58 PM

Reading both articles that praised and criticized Ken Burns series really didnt change my initial opinions and excitement to start watching the series. The positive reviews seemed to outweigh the lower ones, and I tended to disagree with the review by historian/filmmaker Leon Litwack stating that "Burns 11-part series was a superbly produced history of the Civil War, but not of the social revolution which it helped unleash."

As I think I read in another students post, It would seem to me like the whole social revolution aspect of it could be made into a totally seperate series and does not seem to me like it had to be a main focus in Burns's series.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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What level of confidence do you have in this Civil War Series?

by Mark Gorski - Friday, January 18, 2013, 7:14 AM

After watching the first video in the series as well as the video clip on Ken Burns I intend to view these videos as they were intended. As an informative and entertaining inspiration for further research. Regardless of any adverse reviews by staunchy academicians and professional film critics.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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The First Article

by Adam Coutts - Saturday, January 19, 2013, 12:55 PM

With reading the articles I still feel that I like and admire Ken Burns as an innovator when dealing with his works. As many have said its truly a positive reaction to getting others excited about history and to make them want to explore and debate issues. As Robert Toplin stated, "...a lot of people out there believe that history involves a simple, tidy operation of gathering the facts...Yet we know that the facts are not neutral and the pictures are not so objective" (History on the Screen, Karen Bedford 1993). The works are bueatifully designed but some concerns is that not everything about the Civil War is shown and I don't believe a movie or documentary can show everything. So while some might think this is a valid concern I do not.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Confident in the Civil War series!

by Ian MacDonald - Sunday, January 20, 2013, 5:06 PM

I have now seen the first episode of Ken Burns' "Civil War" series and am very confident that it (along with the book) will be a very good resource for learning about the Civil War. I remember watching a few of these episodes way back in middle school and was still drawn to it as much this time as I was back then! The information presented in the first episode was very fascinating. I found myself being "pulled" in right from the start of the episode. That first shot with the silhouette of the cannon against the sunset in the background and the opening quote by Oliver Holmes. And the fact that they started off with giving some basic information about the war (**example-** the war was fought in 10,000 places, more than 3 million fought and 600,000 died) really got the whole series off to a very effective start. I am eager to watch more of these episodes and feel that the series will be a good resource and a good study aid for taking this course on the Civil War.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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**100% Confident!**

by Brendan MacDonald - Sunday, January 20, 2013, 5:33 PM

I have complete confidence that this is a very good source of receiving information about the Civil War. As I stated in a posting I made before, reading some of the negative reviews did not tarnish my opinion of watching this series with the satisfaction that the information that I am getting from it is valid. From watching the Introduction video and then the 1st episode of the series, you can tell that this is a program that was well conceived and worked hard on by Burns and his team. I am excited to watch the next episode and continue learning about the Civil War!

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by Kirk Nikas - Sunday, January 20, 2013, 7:33 PM

Brendan,

I disagree with you on the basis of historical accuracy as presented by Ken burns' documentary because of the length and profundity of the second review's arguments toward the blatant misinformation contained in Ken Burns' The Civil War through the giving of completely wrong restatings of events such as reported by Michael A. Morrison & Robert E. May in their critique posted in *Journal of American Culture*. It was to me personally both unsettling and discomforting, I liked the film, though.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)[< Previous \(Introducing Ken Burns\)](#)

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